

Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development

Case studies

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24 Habitat banking process, Tees Estuary Partnership

Details

Organisation	Tees Estuary Partnership
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24.1 PROJECT SUMMARY

The Tees estuary is highly industrialised and space-constrained, where commercial activity co-exists with internationally-important wildlife habitats. For many years stakeholders in the estuary have worked together to improve the overall environmental standards on the river and its hinterland and are proud to boast a thriving seal colony, major bird habitats and one of the best wetland nature reserves in the country. In addition, many of the major companies operating in the area actively engage in BAPs on their sites, supported by the Industry Nature Conservation Association (INCA), a membership organisation comprised of industry, regulators, local authorities and conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Against this background, Natural England announced a review of the Teesmouth Cleveland Coast SPA boundaries in 2015. To overcome considerable concern raised by industry, a bold approach was embarked upon aiming to extend the level of co-operation already existing to create a genuine partnership to embody the interests of all stakeholders. This group, the Tees Estuary Partnership (TEP) formed early in 2016 and comprises representatives from key industries, the regulators, local authorities and conservation NGOs and is facilitated by INCA. The TEP aims to support the needs of industry and wildlife beyond the SPA review.

24.2 OUTCOMES

As part of its strategy towards meeting the needs of nature conservation, the TEP began development of a habitat banking process for the Tees in summer 2017. In developing this process the initial aim was to learn from experiences elsewhere, but the complexity of the needs of nature conservation and industry would mean that a bespoke solution was required.

The Tees habitat banking system will provide a strategic approach to land availability to meet the mitigation needs of developers in the estuary, leading to a simple and clear planning process. The developers will be able to purchase biodiversity credits in the form of habitat creation/enhancement to offset the debit from the environmental damage caused by development. Landowners will also be able to 'feed' land into the process, while retaining ownership of it, to gain credits from other developers who wish to pay for land management as part of their own mitigation needs. The approach will be rigorous and underpinned by legal agreements.

There will be significant and exciting benefits for wildlife as the strategic approach. This will lead to a network of sites that aim to retain high quality existing habitat, and both enhance and create a range of important habitats, particularly for water birds, but also in support of a multitude of non-avian species. In-roads have already been made in developing the structure and governance of the habitat banking process and definition of the biodiversity metrics system (Defra 2012), which will support the whole process, is being progressed. It is hoped that 2018 will see many new opportunities opening up as design of the process gathers pace.

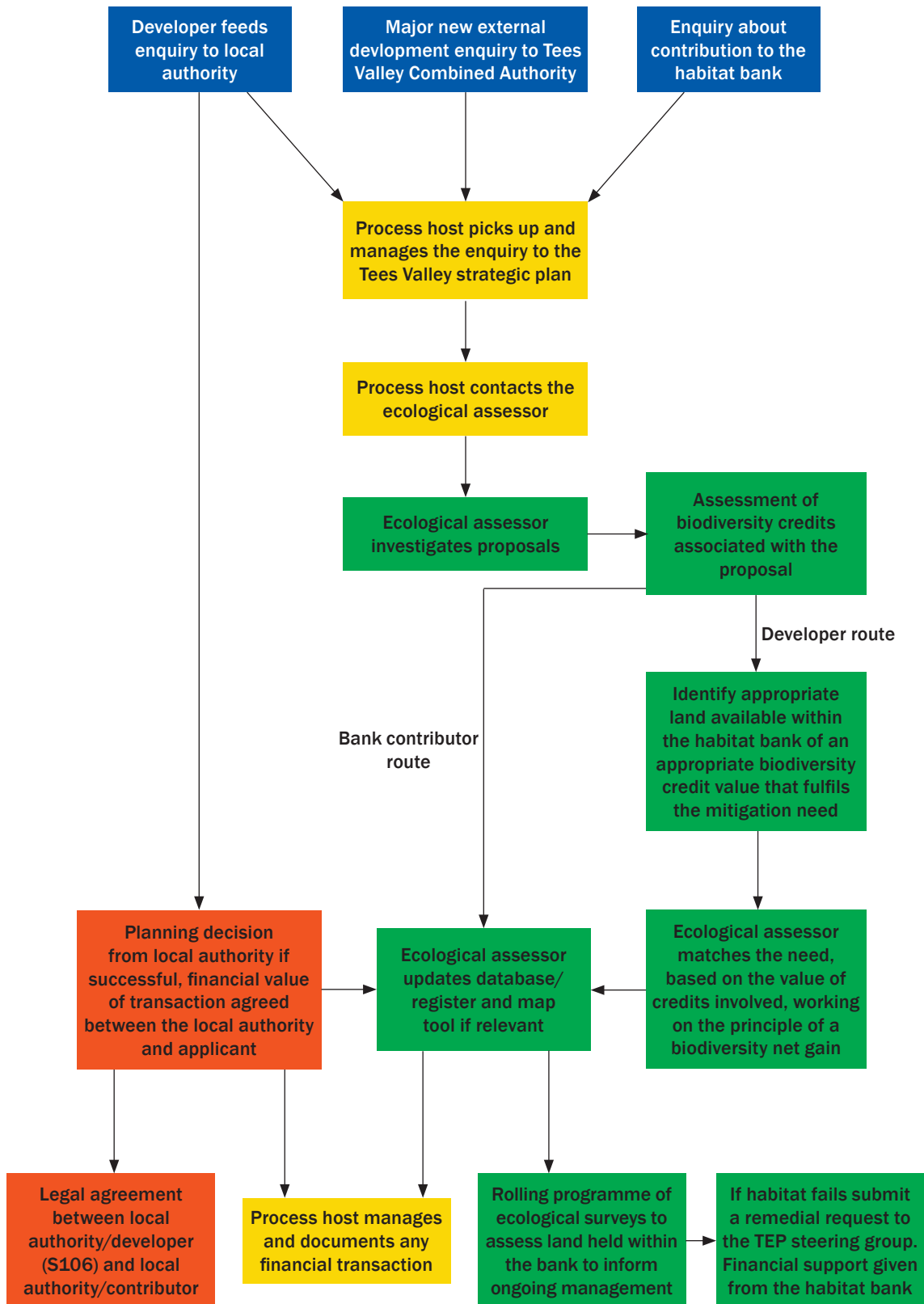


Figure 24.1 Proposed habitat banking process